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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS AND RADIO NEWS BRIEFING, WEDNESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 26, 1962, 12:53 p.m., EDT

MR. WHITE: Gentlemen, I apologize for being late. I appreciate your indulgence.

I would like to introduce and to welcome to our meeting today Mr. Chow Tien Kou, who is Chief of the First Department of the Government Information Office of the Republic of China.

I am very happy to have you here today, sir.

We have two releases put out earlier. The first, No. 582, "Remarks by W. Michael Blumenthal, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, before a Meeting of the Commerce and Industry Association of New York, Inc." This was delivered at 11:00 this morning.

Secondly: No. 584, the announcement by the Acting Secretary today of the appointment of Mr. Allan Robbins, R-a-b-b-i-n-s, as Special assistant for International Business in the Office of the Under Secretary.

[Please refer to Press Releases Nos. 582 and 584, both dated September 26, 1962.]

I would also like to tell you that Governor Harriman is giving an extemporaneous informal talk before the Japan-American Society, at 12:30, at the National Press

Club. There will be no text, but a tape of the talk will be available later in our office for anyone who wants to hear the play back.

Now I will anticipate your question by saying that: At present, our information with respect to the construction of a fishing port in Cuba is limited to a statement made yesterday by Fidel Castro, during the televised ceremony of the signing of a fishing agreement between Cuba and the Soviet Union.

According to Castro, a fishing port will be constructed in Cuba, with Cuban manpower and materials, for which Cuba will receive about 12 million pesos in food items from the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union, according to this announcement, will provide plans, technicians, and equipment, and will use the port to facilitate the operations of the Soviet fishing fleet in the Atlantic area.

Any activity of the Soviet Union in Cuba is a matter of concern to the United States. This latest Soviet attempt to increase its involvement in Cuba will be watched closely by the United States Government to determine whether and to what extent it may affect--

Q Talk a little slower. --whether--

A --whether and to what extent it may affect our national security.

Now the only thing I could add to that, I would do on a strictly BACKGROUND basis, which is that: If, indeed, this does involve only a fishing port, Castro seems to be playing this up as a further contribution by the Soviets to shoring up the sagging Cuban economy.

Q Shoring up?

A ~~Shoring~~ up the sagging Cuban economy.

It appears, at first glance, that when under way this operation may make a small contribution in this direction. However, it is important to note that a fishing port, constructed for the purposes announced, will give the Soviets a chance to compete more favorably with fishing fleets which have traditionally fished these waters.

Aside from the United States, I refer primarily to Mexico and other gulf and Caribbean countries.

In summary:

Q Is this still BACKGROUND? "In summary:"?

A Yes.

In summary: This is further evidence of Soviet exploitation of the Cuban people, and in the direction of injuring the interests of neighboring countries.

That's all I have.

Q Would you repeat that last sentence, please? And in the direction of what?

A Of injuring the interests--

Q --further evidence of Soviet exploitation of the Cuban people?

A That's right.

Q And--

A And in the direction--

Q --of injuring the interests--

A --of injuring the interests of neighboring countries. ~~Aside from the fact that Mexico & other Latin American countries are also being exploited by the Soviet Union.~~

Q I don't-- Well, would you consider putting your final background comment on the record?

A No, sir. The statement I made on the record I will just stand on that. These are further thoughts with the limited information that we have at this point.

Q Your general comment suggests sort of an assumption that this may very well be a fishing port. Is that correct?

A No. We add to that: this latest attempt on the part of the Soviet Union to increase its involvement in Cuba will be watched closely by the US to determine whether and to what extent it may affect our national security.

Q How do you foresee that this will injure?

A We are taking no remarks by the Cuban dictator at their face value.

Q Is this BACKGROUND, Linc, or--

A Pardon.

Q Is this BACKGROUND, or regular?

A Yes.

Q Linc, the Castro speech I don't believe said exactly where the port is going to be. Does the State Department have any information which indicates where this port may be?

A The only report I have--and, again, I had better do this BACKGROUND because I am not sure of it, and I don't want it held to me or to the Department--was that the Soviet (what his title is) Minister of Fisheries or something of the sort--that ^{on} this same TV program indicated (if it did not say flatly) that it would be at Havana.

Q Mr. White, has Mexico or other Caribbean countries--have they indicated in which way would their interests be injured by this port?

A It is a pure matter of mathematics. There are so many fish in these waters. A large Soviet fleet, estimated at some 600 trawlers, will obviously cut into that take.

Q What is the basis--

Q That is the estimate of Soviet trawlers operating in the Atlantic, or what is it?

A Yes.

Q Are you still on BACKGROUND on the 600?

A Yes.

Q Would those include the ones that are fishing around New Foundland? I am asking because you mentioned fishing in the Caribbean waters.

A Well, the estimate that I give you is the estimate of the over-all fleet currently fishing in Atlantic waters, from New Foundland down into the gulf.

Q It is on the western side of the Atlantic?

A Yes.

Q What is the number of other nations? Any idea?

A I don't. I am sorry. I don't have the statistics. Mexico has quite a large fishing fleet. The Caribbean islands have smaller but important fishing fleets to their economy.

Q Linc, the 600 would not include any Russian fishing trawler operating, say, east of Iceland, in that area--the eastern Atlantic?

A No. No, no.

Q Do you know whether or not work has started on this base?

A I do not, John.

Q Linc, if--

A I think, again quoting (and don't hold me to quoting precisely)--but the indication of the Soviet Minister of Fisheries, if I give him his correct title, was that they hope to complete this port by 1965, and expressed the wish that it could be completed earlier.

Q Is it the expectation that this port will attract more Soviet trawlers than 600?

A Well, I don't want to breathe on any crystal balls at this point. You can rest assured that this will be closely watched by the United States Government.

Q Linc, another BACKGROUND question: If the Soviet Union does increase its competitive operations in the fishing industry in this area, would this violate anything? Would this violate US or Inter-American fishing agreements?

A I don't want to say, but I am simply saying that the affect of the act--

Q Well, are these international fisheries agreements? They are all just bilaterals, aren't they? Or is there any multilateral fishery agreement?

A I am sure there are multilateral agreements Lucy. But I do not know whether they define areas in which countries fish. There are traditional areas where--perhaps not under international law, but under common

practice--these fleets are the primary ones in there.

Q Linc, could you tell us BACKGROUND, the degree of concern on the part of the United States Government that this fishing port will--

A No, I don't want to again breathe on crystal balls in this direction. As I say here: Any activity of the Soviet Union in Cuba, given the circumstances under which the Cuban people have absolutely no voice in their destiny today, is of concern to the United States Government.

Q I was going to say on the degree of concern that this may be merely a mask for a naval base, or some sort of a military base for the Soviet Union.

A Nothing is ruled out. This is a matter which, as I say, will be very closely watched.

Q Does the United States consider at the present moment that the Soviet fishing trawlers can be a menace to American security?

A That remains to be seen, Mike.

Q So you do not exclude that the Soviet fishing trawlers can endanger the American security?

A If they were for fishing purposes only, my answer might be different. Yes, they could be.

Q Do you have information that they are not for fishing purposes only in the Atlantic?

A We have our ideas.

Q Linc, on another subject: Do you have any information on a reported new buzzing incident in the Berlin corridor today?

A Just the tickler. There was one, I think, yesterday which was protested locally. I assume this will be protested locally, as well.

Q There is some comment on the Hill this morning about the possibility of adding a "fight, if we must in Berlin" clause to the resolution on Cuba. Does the State Department have any comment on that suggestion?

A I am not filled in on that situation at all, Jim.

Q Do you have any additional information from what you had yesterday in regards to this Panamanian proposal for a small Caribbean NATO?

A No.

Q Thank you very much.

A You are very welcome, sir.

[Whereupon, at 1:11 p.m., the press conference was concluded.]

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